

HOUSING COMMITTEE

24 June 2014

3

7.00 pm – 9.55 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)	P	Councillor Gary Powell	P
Councillor Doina Cornell (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Lesley Reeves	P
Councillor Gordon Craig	P	Councillor Mark Rees	P
Councillor Caroline Molloy	P	Councillor Steve Robinson	P
Councillor John Marjoram	A	Councillor Emma Sims	A
Councillor Liz Peters	P	Councillor Debbie Young	P

P = Present A = Absent

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Stephen Lydon

Councillor Simon Pickering

Officers Present:

Strategic Head (Tenant Services)
Head of Housing Management
Sheltered Housing Manager
Tenancy Enforcement Officer
Asset Manager
Principal Accountant
Performance and Improvement Officer

Contracts Manager
Programme Manager
Accountancy Manager
Democratic Services Assistant
HR Manager
Human Resources Officers

Invited Guests:

Lorraine Regan, Assistant Director of Health and Wellbeing ConsultCIH
Adrian Redmond, Ark Housing Consultant
Sandy Mutton, Chair of Stroud Council Housing Forum
Sally Millett, Tenant Representative

HC.001

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Marjoram and Emma Sims.

HC.002 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

HC.003 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED **That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 March 2014 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

HC.004 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None received.

HC.005 **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was agreed that the following items be added to the work programme for 2014/2015:

- 1 Joint working with Community Services, to include Local Lettings Policy.
- 2 Reports on the condition and number of non-standard construction properties will be circulated to all members, and included in the Head of Housing Contracts next New Build Programme update.
- 3 Tenant Involvement.

These items to be mirrored in the Stroud Council Housing Forum agendas.

RESOLVED **To note the work programme, subject to the inclusion of the above in the 2014/15 work programme.**

HC.006 **SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE FINAL REPORT**

The Head of Housing Management introduced Lorraine Regan, Assistant Director of Health and Wellbeing at ConsultCIH. He explained that the proposals if adopted would enable Stroud Council Housing to deliver and plan for a stable service.

Ms Regan presented the report attached to the agenda, making the following key points:

- The report was commissioned due to the County Council reducing its level of funding and changing the funding to provide for services throughout the community not just those living in sheltered housing (referred to a Contract Level 3). There has been detailed research and consultation with a great many stakeholders, including residents in every sheltered scheme.
- By October 2013, it was clear that Stroud would not have the capacity to deliver Contract Level 3, with the delivery of support out into the wider residents.
- The majority of residents had been unhappy with the rota scheme, which was therefore stopped at an early stage in the study.
- Various options for the future were considered.
- The proposals are that there should be 14 full time equivalent site managers to carry out practical activities at the home, in addition there would be support workers available to help those vulnerable people who require support.

- Self-payers will be £12.09 better off per week.
- Tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit would be no worse off.
- The current alarm systems will stay in place but Stroud is recommended to investigate the provision of a single unified system.

During the discussion that followed the following points were made:

- Site Officers should be contactable by mobile phone at all times.
- A trainee member of staff could be hired, to provide continuity over sickness and holiday periods.
- Time away from the sites at meetings can be to the detriment of residents.
- Time away at training and meetings is minimal – every other month.
- Satisfaction of tenants has improved since January.
- Clearer long term vision is necessary to develop a strategy for the future provision of service to residents.
- The new proposed arrangements will enable Stroud to provide support to those who need it, and to cease attempting to provide it to those who do not.
- Many Stroud sheltered housing tenants are in sheltered housing simply because of their age and need for accommodation, not because they are vulnerable or need support.
- A header sheet summarising the report for Council would be helpful.
- Residents in the community often need support too.
- More cuts for Health and Social Care from Gloucestershire County are likely in the future.
- Many local authorities have now disengaged from this work, it is good that Stroud is still trying to deliver a service.
- Tenants want daily contact with people to reduce isolation, and telecare cannot replace that requirement.
- The term Sheltered Housing is not necessarily the most appropriate as many residents do not need or want support. Active elderly people do not necessarily require support and often wish to contribute to their communities.
- The site managers are proposed to be on-site from Monday to Friday. There would be emergency response 365 days a year.
- Loneliness and isolation is a significant issue for many elderly people. The proposals will help vulnerable people by providing personal contact.
- A long-lasting solution is necessary.
- Thanks were expressed to the Project Board and to CIH for their extensive work on this project.

The following amendment to the recommendations was proposed by Councillor Debbie Young, seconded by Councillor Doina Cornell and agreed unanimously:

To undertake an independent review of the implementation and operation of the new structure and to report back to the Housing Committee within 12 months of implementation.

The recommendations of the report, with the amendment above, were proposed to put to full Council by Councillor Doina Cornell, seconded by Councillor Debbie Young and agreed.

**RECOMMENDED
TO COUNCIL**

1. To provide a housing management service that enables independent living as set out in the CIH new service model recommendations as follows, and not to enter into a further County Council contract to provide housing related support.
2. These recommendations are contained in the CIH report page 59-61 and are set out as follows:
 - a. Carry out a detailed housing support needs, assessment including gifts, skills and strengths assessment of all tenants to ensure that the level of support provided in the future is correct and the levels of staffing are appropriate to meet the identified needs.
 - b. Review and amend the current cleaning and grounds maintenance arrangements.
 - c. Develop and put in place a clear review mechanism to enable tenants to access support when their needs and circumstances change.
 - d. Develop a robust process for referrals for more intensive support as and when required via the county floating support service (available from October 2014) in partnership with other providers.
 - e. Allocate support staff on an area basis but with designated schemes and with clear, communicated responsibility for providing support and promoting social activities.
 - f. Ensure that staff have the appropriate training and skill sets particularly in the areas of safeguarding, dementia and managing mental health.
 - g. The two “extra sheltered” schemes no longer be classified as such and operate in a similar way to other schemes, with appropriate transitional arrangements.
 - h. That Stroud give priority to the future of the support service review, but with a clear strategy for taking forward the recommendations to be outlined in the forthcoming sheltered housing asset report.
 - i. Review and consult on the designate of a number of properties across SDC as older persons properties so that older people have more choice about older persons accommodation.

- j. Carry out and consult upon a fundamental review to look at implementing a new allocations and lettings policy for older people's housing.
 - k. Develop and implement a shared vision and strategy for an older people's support service with key internal and external stakeholders; including health, to ensure future service provision in meeting the targets and outcomes.
 - l. Continue to work closely with the Health and Wellbeing Board, CCGs and health and social care commissioners, to raise the profile of housing support options for meeting health and wellbeing outcomes with reference to the new responsibilities for local authorities set out in the Care Bill 2014.
 - m. Take forward discussions with health in respect of potential funding to support a post that would help address local health priorities and reduce social isolation across sheltered schemes and the wider community.
 - n. Develop and implement a shared vision and strategy in partnership with residents and other stakeholders, for a future stock of sheltered housing accommodation that focuses on the need for high quality schemes that meet a range of minimum tailored standards.
 - o. To consider and consult upon opening up the sheltered housing asset to the community in the future.
 - p. Undertake a mapping exercise across the wider community to fully understand the resources available to older people.
3. To apply an increase of £2.50 per rent week in sheltered housing service charges (from £22.42 to £24.92) with effect from 6th October 2014 or such later date thereafter as the new service referred to above is implemented and subject to protection of existing tenants as set out in this report.

HC.007

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN (HRA) 2013-14

The Principal Accountant presented a report regarding the actual revenue income and expenditure on the Housing Revenue Account for the financial year 2013/14.

The following key points were made:

- Reserves have been reduced (as planned) by £1.3 million.
- Since 2012, Stroud has been able to keep the rents paid by tenants and spend 80% more on council housing.
- A catch up programme of maintenance is still underway reflecting the under-resourcing experienced up until 2012.
- Voids were £358,000 overspent – due to higher number of voids.
- £2.7 million was spent on new builds.
- £5.8 million was spent on renewable heating.
- An income of £1.4 million was generated by Right to Buy, following the sale of 47 properties since 2012.
- This income will be used to support the new build programme.
- The decision made to keep the receipts locally means that new properties can be built (using 70% matched funding). The match funding target is nearly met already with 3 years still to run to the deadline.
- The reserves at the end of the year will be reduced to £1.9 million, close to the target of £1.6 million.

During the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:

- Concern was expressed about renewable heating overspend mis-coding. It was explained that this had been noticed during the year end process. It was too late to undo and redo the work. The work had been completed, payments were made on time and the grant was claimed; the process has been changed for next year to make sure that this work is coded correctly first time and any errors picked up more promptly than the quarterly monitoring reports.
- Pressure of work led to this error. 75% of the renewable heating installation work was completed within the last 3 months of the financial year, equivalent to 300 heating installations. There were many elements to these installations - invoices that were received after the close down. Many were from small local businesses so it was important to pay promptly. The only problem with this significant project was apportionment.
- All capital expenditure had to be allocated at short notice, to pay promptly and to meet audit requirements.
- Concern was expressed by one member that close to £1million was wrongly coded, and that solar panels were purchased too soon and are now in storage. It was queried whether sometimes it would be better to reduce ambitions and not worry about pursuing grants. If the Council had not bid for the grant, then these budget mis-codings would not have occurred.
- PV cells worth £1million are in storage which will secure the previously available higher feed-in-tariff rates. These will be used in approximately 300 installations during the first half of this year.
- Tenant Services has kept within a 5% tolerance of both revenue and capital budgets.
- Officers in Tenant Services had managed close to a 80% increase in Capital spend.

It was proposed, seconded and resolved to accept the HRA out-turn report.

RESOLVED (a) To note the position of actual income and expenditure on the HRA for 2013/14 together with

expenditure on the capital programme as set out in tables 1 and 2;

- (b) To recommend to Strategy and Resources to that HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2014/15 be increased by £313,300 for budget carried forward from 2013/14 to 2014/15 as listed in table 4.**

HC.008

TENANT PHOTO IDENTITY CARDS TO COUNTER TENANCY FRAUD

The Tenancy Enforcement Officer introduced the report regarding the proposed introduction of photographic identification to assist in the reduction of tenancy fraud.

He referred to the Briefing Note circulated to this Committee, in which the Stroud Council Housing Forum had recorded its reservations about the proposed Tenant Photo Identity Card scheme.

His presentation included the following points:

- The proposed ID cards would help identify tenants so that visiting officers would know that they are speaking to the legitimate tenant.
- The cards would help to eliminate illegal sub-letting.
- Levels of tenancy fraud are unknown; data matching will be taking place during this year, it is hoped this will help indicate potential levels of fraud.
- The Tenancy Enforcement Officer is currently investigating four cases of tenancy fraud.
- Occasionally matters are resolved very speedily ie within a week, more usually these matters take a longer period and sometimes involve legal action.
- The format of the card is yet to be decided.
- It is the duty of the council to investigate potential tenancy fraud and to take appropriate action.
- The principles of the relevant sections of the Data Protection Act can be directly supplied to tenants to make sure that they understand the data protection that must be put in place.
- Tenants may lose the card and they will be charged for replacements.
- Tenants are not being singled out for ID cards, tenants are the users of the service and it is therefore proposed that they have an ID card.
- An awareness campaign delivered to tenants around personal safety issues when they receive a visitor at their home may be helpful.

In the discussion that followed the following points were made:

- The advantages of ID cards for sheltered housing tenants would be negligible as there is very little sheltered housing tenant fraud.
- It is important that the Council acts to protect its housing stock from fraud.
- It is unfair that tenants that have not objected to an ID card should be charged if they lose the ID card.
- Financial incentives to tenants to report known tenant fraud can be counterproductive, producing false trails.
- Other social housing providers use ID cards.
- When technology allows a secure PDA device could hold photographic ID of tenants, however this is not yet possible.

- Stroud Council Housing Forum does not support this proposal.
- The photographs will be stored on the existing Northgate system.
- More members of the Stroud Council Housing Forum were in favour of the scheme than the briefing note indicates.

RESOLVED **To approve this process as a way to limit the impact of Tenancy Fraud on the Council.**

HC.009 **HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AGENCY (HCA) GRANT**

The Ark Housing Consultant introduced the report, updating the bid made by Stroud District Council to the Homes and Communities Agency.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- By providing affordable rent housing, social housing is reduced.
- In September there will be an update to this Committee, and subsequently Members will be able to decide how to spend the surplus in the HRA.
- Affordable rent is set at 80% of the market rent.
- Income created from affordable rent, can be ploughed back in to creating further housing for residents.
- Councils are being encouraged to provide more affordable rent properties.
- All properties would still be eligible for housing benefit tenants.
- Affordable rent properties will generate more income than social rent properties.
- The vast majority of council housing stock is set at a social rent, not an affordable rent.
- Running costs of the homes built to modern construction standards, will be much cheaper than older housing stock.
- Residents can choose not to bid for the properties if they do not want to pay an affordable rent.
- A regular update will be given to this Committee.

RESOLVED **a) To approve SDC’s bid to the HCA for the following schemes, noting in particular the requirement to charge an affordable rent on new build homes, but not for existing residents returning to new homes:**

- Leonard Stanley
- Top of Town (phase 1 & 2)
- The Corriett, Cam
- Fishers Rd, Berkeley
- Hillside, Coaley
- Southbank
- Chapel Street, Cam

b) To delegate to the Strategic Head of Tenant Services with the Legal Monitoring Officer and the Strategic Head of Finance a mandate to sign the HCA funding agreement(s).

HC.010 **STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL WOOLAWAYS**
REGENERATION PROGRAMME

The Ark Housing Consultant introduced the report, updating the Committee on the Minchinhampton regeneration site, which aims to provide an alternative housing choice to local residents.

- RESOLVED**
1. To approve the principle of converting up to 10 properties at the Minchinhampton regeneration site from rent to shared ownership; the final numbers being dependent upon the number of residents returning to the scheme.
 2. To delegate Authority for the final mix and numbers (up to 10 properties) to the Strategic Head (Tenant Services) in consultation with the Housing Committee Chair.
 3. To approve a rent of 2.5% of the unsold equity.
 4. To approve the allocation of 3% of the open market value of the shared ownership properties for marketing, sales and legal fees.

HC.011 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO DEVELOP AN 'IN HOUSE PROVIDER'**

An update was presented to the Committee by the Asset Manager:

- The project aims to move the gas servicing, maintenance and ad hoc boiler replacements service in house.
- This has been a long standing aspiration of SDC.
- The first meeting of the Task and Finish team to oversee the development of the in house service took place in June 2014.
- Regular meetings will now take place.
- A project team has been set up, with sub-project teams where relevant.
- The launch date will be set as July 2015.
- SCHF has been updated.

In the discussion that followed these points were made:

- This task has been set by the Corporate Delivery Plan.
- The business case will be presented to the Committee in October.

RESOLVED **To note the oral update.**

HC.012 **PERFORMANCE FOR 2013-14**

A power point presentation of the year's performance was shown.

Key points made included:

- Void turnaround has been reduced to 15 days.
- Tenant satisfaction has improved.
- £200,000 more rent has been paid than last year, representing 98% of that due.

- Stroud Council Housing is now self financing, with a £91 million budget.
- Performance has improved.
- Challenges continue to be faced.
- £20 million has been spent on developing new homes.

In response to questions officers provided the following additional information:

- Emergency responses are made within 4 hours to vulnerable tenants and within 24 hours to other tenants.
- Void turnaround for houses requiring major refurbishment (ie requiring a budget of over £10,000) has improved due to improved programme management; refurbishment of major voids now commences within 3 weeks (rather than 4 months).
- Improvements have been made in spite of a 30% increase in voids and a new Voids Team.
- Councillors are recommended to go out with the Voids Team, and would appreciate a regular voids update.
- Councillors requested a briefing note showing the background to the headline statistics.
- Re-let time has been reduced to 1.7 days once keys are returned to SDC from a contractor.

RESOLVED **To note the report and to request that this performance data is shared with the public via a press release.**

HC.013 **APPOINTMENT OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPRESENTATIVES**

The Chair confirmed that two Committee members were required to meet with senior management teams on a quarterly basis to monitor the performance of services within Environment Committee and report back on an exception basis. Several expressions of interest were made and it was

RESOLVED **Councillors Debbie Young and Councillor Lesley Reeves would represent Committee.**

HC.014 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Chair drew Members' attention to the list of outside bodies within the remit of Committee for the civic year:-

Organisation	Councillor Appointed
Care and Repair (Stroud)	Councillor Stephen Moore
Home Start Stroud and Dursley	Councillor Liz Ashton

RESOLVED **To agree the appointments to outside bodies as set out above.**

HC.015

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

None received.

The meeting closed at 9.55 pm.

Chair